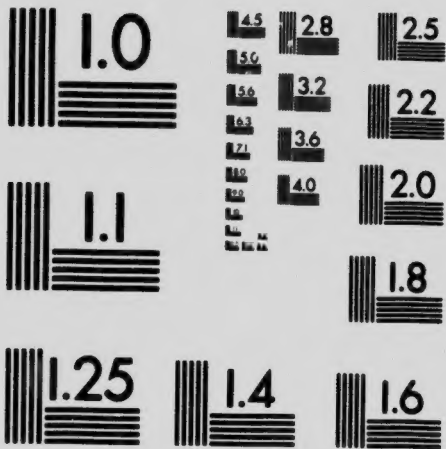




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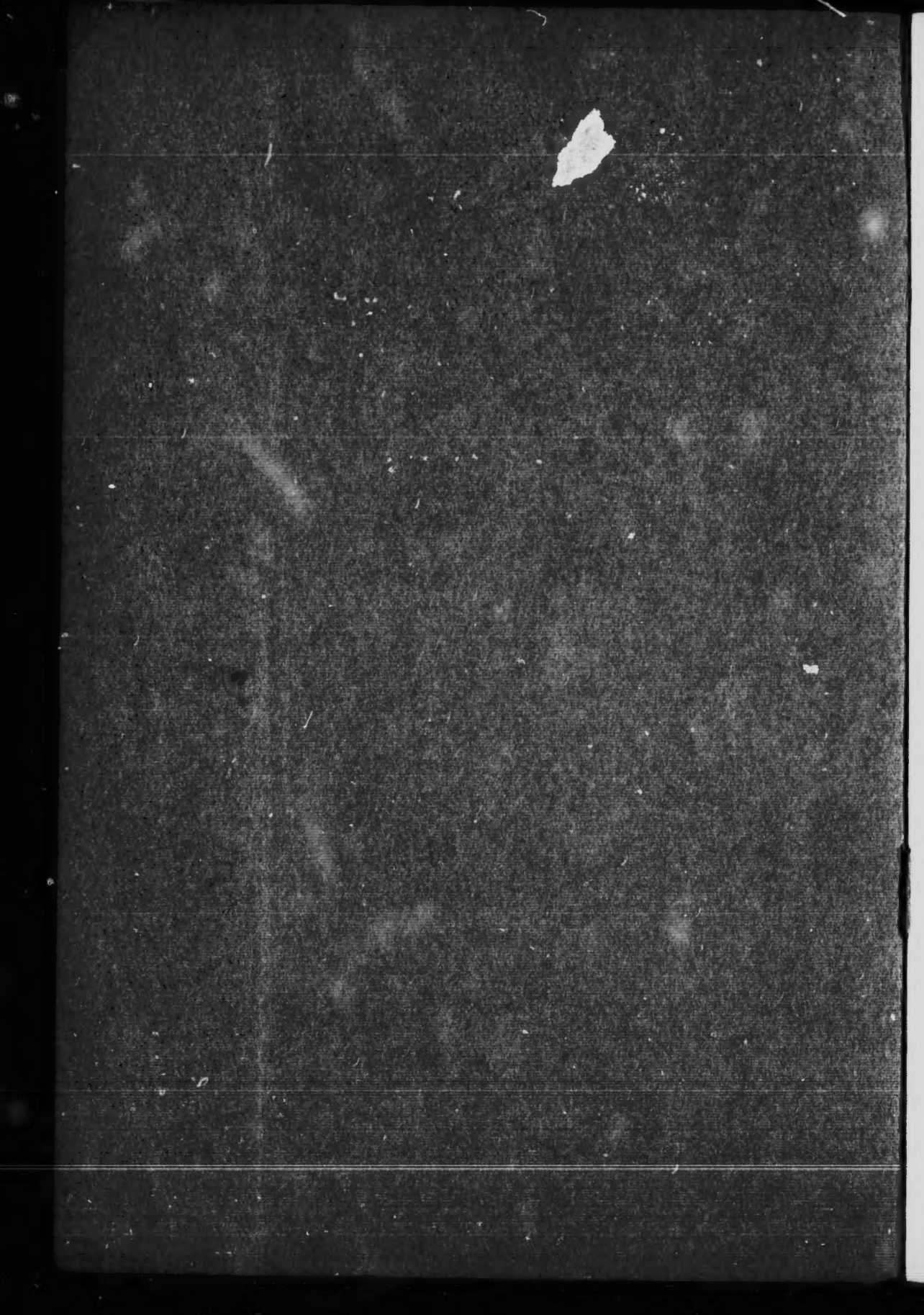
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CHURCH UNITY LEAGUE

The President's Address
at the
First Annual Meeting
of the League

Held in Toronto, May 29th,
1914

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF CANADA
GENERAL SYNOD, ARCHIVES



[Herbert Symonds was Pres.]

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

We meet together this evening as a body of men and women who are united by a common ideal and a common conviction. We believe that the Christian Church is a Universal Society, and that Unity is a fundamental note of the ideal Church. We are convinced that the Holy Spirit is leading men, both in heart and mind, to strive to forward this ideal, so that the spirit of our times may be described as the spirit of unity. But God ever works through men. It is not enough to say that in His own good time He will make us one, and then fold our hands and do nothing. We who cherish the ideal and who share in the conviction must be up and doing. This is the *raison d'être* of the Church Unity League.

At our first meeting when the Society was organized you did me the honour of electing me the first President of the League, and my first duty this evening is to give you some information as to the work which has been accomplished.

I must remind you that the League sprang out of the publication of a circular letter on Church Unity, signed primarily by thirty clergymen representing important cities from one end of the country to the other, and subsequently signed by two hundred and fifty more of the clergy, and about a thousand laymen. The circular letter contained two propositions, one looking to the possibility of ministers of other denominations speaking, with proper authority, in our churches, the other to the admission, where there was good reason for it, of members of other denominations to our altars. These propositions aroused considerable opposition, and it was decided to omit them from our

Constitution. This did not mean that we had changed our minds, but that we did not wish to exclude from our membership those who, sympathizing with our general position, were not prepared to endorse the propositions. The result of this omission was to throw virtually all the stress of the League upon its Educative work. For the furtherance of this the Constitution provides for the formation of Local Branches of the League, and it is in this direction that our principal activity has lain. You will be glad to hear that we have now local centres at Toronto, Port Hope, Peterborough, Lindsay, Kingston, Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec. At each of these places excellent meetings have been held. Much interest has been aroused, and the local press has given satisfactory accounts of the meetings. This is not, perhaps, as large a measure of achievement as we looked forward to, but under the circumstances it is perhaps as much as could be expected. I interpreted the feeling of the Annual Meeting last year as in favour of action and progress, but not of anything like a whirlwin campaign. Personally, I believe our strength was, and still is, to feel our way from point to point, so that our growth may be quiet, solid and enduring, rather than sensational but ephemeral.

POLICY FOR COMING YEAR

If, in saying this, I voice the general opinion of the League, then it seems to me that our policy for the ensuing season is clear. I would in the first place advocate the extension of the League's influence through the medium of the local centre. It will be observed that we have no local centres west of Toronto. I think an effort should be made to plant at least half-a-dozen in Western Ontario. From the larger

centres it ought to be possible to organize branches in the small towns and villages. If the officers of each local centre would resolve to form at least one such branch, there is little doubt that it could be accomplished.

The question has been put to me several times : What is the particular function of the Local Branch at the present time? My reply is, it must be Educational. The following suggestions may be useful :

(1) Each Branch should, where practicable, arrange for a special Church Unity Sunday. In some places this might be Whitsunday, but in the larger towns the summer exodus has already begun and in such places I would suggest an earlier date.

(2) Small conferences with members of other denominations might be organized. It is surprising how much unity of spirit and very often of ideas is revealed at such gatherings, which can scarcely fail to be instrumental for good.

(3) Thirdly, and in my judgment this is the most important undertaking, each branch should try and organize a series of meetings with addresses or lectures on some phases of the problem of unity. I think there must be a dozen of us who are willing to prepare one or two lectures and deliver them wherever they may be invited. The material at our disposal is abundant, but the later phases of the doctrines which are the chief stumbling-blocks to unity are known to but few. The time has come when in simple fashion it is quite possible to make the newer knowledge with reference to the foundation and organization of the Church familiar to intelligent people. I believe a series of lectures given in all our local centres, and carefully reported in the local press would be productive of real and lasting good.

(4) The Local Branch can assist the Executive in the circulation of literature on the subject. This is a part of our work which has not as yet been developed, but we hope something will be done by the Executive this year.

I would earnestly commend these four points to the consideration of the officers of the Local Branches. We must make ourselves felt as centres of activity. We shall win respect according to the measure in which we prove our sincerity and our zeal.

FAITH AND ORDER

A very important point for our consideration is our relationship to the movement for a world-wide conference of Christian churches on Faith and Order. We are a very small body, the conference is a very large one. Yet we are related. We have a community of idea and of purpose, and there is no doubt that we have the power to help or to hinder that movement.

I have been in communication with Mr. Gardiner, the Secretary, and I am a subscriber to their literature. As a result of my enquiries, I find the present position of the Conference to be distinctly encouraging. An immense number of committees of many churches have been organized, and the feeling of sympathy with the object in mind—i. e., the holding of the Conference—is undoubtedly wide-spread. On the other hand, the difficulties in the way are very great. The merely secretarial work is enormous, the organizing of all the various committees and the collating of their results is a stupendous task. When the idea of the Conference was first endorsed the year 1915 was mentioned as its possible date. It is now clear that it will be several years before matters are sufficiently in train for the final arrangements. In the meantime the Conference

is aiming at what I have suggested as our principal work, viz., Education.

The difficulties and dangers that lie in the course of this great undertaking, are twofold. (1) On the one hand I see a tendency in some quarters to suppress the open and candid discussion of the differences which keep the churches apart. By raising controversial questions, it is said, you endanger the very possibility of the Conference, or at least you greatly increase the difficulties of its organizers. To this I would in reply say: These questions are already raised and in a highly acute form by the Bishop of Zanzibar's open letter to the Bishop of St. Alban's on the Kikuyu Conference, and in other issues. But a more important consideration to my mind is the probability that the suppression of controversial topics until the meeting of the Conference, would spell disaster. It is no use shutting our eyes to obvious facts. Is the Anglican Communion going into the Conference with absolutely antagonistic views and voices on the question which is admittedly the crux of the Unity movement? That will most assuredly happen unless during the next few years we earnestly, candidly, straightforwardly discuss the question of the origin of the Church and the nature of its ministry. If the Anglican Communion goes into this Conference, which is of its summoning, with the simple *non possumus* of the extreme High Church party, then not only will the Conference fail, but the work of Unity will receive a severe blow, and the Anglican Church will have laid itself open to the charge of inviting a Conference and coming to it with their minds already made up. I am convinced this is a real danger, but it is one that may be averted if before the Conference we reach some conclusions one way or another as to our own

Anglican policy. And how can such conclusions be arrived at without discussion ?

(2) The other danger is, of course, in the opposite direction. It is lest a bitter and personal spirit be imported into our discussions, and lest sweeping denunciations be made on the ground of individual cases. Let me give one illustration of this latter danger. A woman belonging to the Cathedral in an American city, left the city and becoming attached to the Congregational Church, wrote the Cathedral for a letter from the Rector, who was also Dean. The Dean refused to issue it, and the Congregational minister immediately communicated the circumstance to the leading newspaper of his denomination, adding that if this was the spirit of the P. E. Church, what was the good of a Conference. The criticism of a whole Church, based on the action of an individual is tempting, but it is to be deprecated. There is also a danger in the kind of criticism directed against the "Church Unity League." In some quarters it has been exceedingly bitter, and I would submit to those who are concerned for the success of the world Conference, that they should discuss the Church Unity League and its doings in a calmer and more judicial frame of mind.

On our part, I think there should be consideration at every step of the bearing of our action upon the issue of the Conference. We are warmly in sympathy with it. We believe we can be of service to it, and I feel sure that we shall refuse to take any step that can reasonably be held likely to prejudice its great object.

II. THE CHURCH AND THE MINISTRY

In the discussion of the subject of Church Unity, it does not seem possible to omit reference to the vexed

question of the origin and nature of the authority of the ministry. This is indeed the crux of the problem at present. However carefully it may for a time be concealed, it is always there. On the other hand, it is not a subject concerning which there is nothing new to be said. On the contrary, the patient, careful, scholarly investigation of the early history of the Church has produced results which have fundamentally changed the position of all scholars with reference to the origins of the Church and its ministry.

The old controversy turned almost solely on the testimony of the New Testament. It was *assumed* that the one right and permanent form of the ministry would be found there. Some scholars found Congregationalism, others Presbyterianism, yet others Episcopacy. So far as Episcopacy was concerned, the argument took two forms. In the one which we may call the Evangelical view, Episcopacy was held to be scriptural, but not necessary to the being of a church, which must be tested by more spiritual tests than an external title. Nevertheless, it was important, and by no means to be lightly disregarded. In the High Church view it assumed greater importance, and was regarded with gradually increasing emphasis as of the *esse* of the Church. Yet exceptions were made in favour of Presbyterian Protestants on the Continent, on the ground that Episcopacy could not be had by them. Finally, a most rigid form of Episcopacy was propounded by the leaders of the Oxford movement, a form which so distinguished an authority as Dr. Sanday declares to be new in the Church of England. His words should be carefully weighed: "It should be distinctly borne in mind that the more sweeping refusal to recognize the non-episcopal Reformed Churches is not, and can never be made a doctrine of

the Church of England. Too many of her representative men have not shared it. Hooker did not hold it ; Andrewes expressly disclaimed it ; Cosin freely communicated with the French Reformed Church during his exile. Indeed it is not until the last half of the 19th century that more than a relatively small minority of English Churchmen have been committed to it." (*The Conception of Priesthood*, p. 95.)

In the year 1869, Dr. Lightfoot, then Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge, published his epoch-making essay on "The Christian Ministry." Lightfoot's scholarship was so accurate and profound, he was so universally admired, he was so free from controversial bias, that all trusted him and regarded him as a bulwark of the Church. The main conclusion at which he arrived was that Episcopacy was not a direct institution of our Lord, or of His Apostles, but was the result of a process development under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This process had its beginnings in Apostolic times.

Hatch's Brampton Lectures followed and produced as violent a controversy as Lightfoot's Essay, but less shock. It is a remarkable thing that practically all the really first-class authorities for the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic period take similar although not identical ground with Lightfoot. Westcott, Hort, Sanday, together with Lightfoot, may be said to stand in a class by themselves, and every one of them took the modern, broader view of the subject. The only man of equal note on the other side is the late Dr. Moberley, but his special authority lay not in his historical science, but in philosophy. Bishop Gore is undoubtedly a brilliant man, but he would be the first to own that he is not a specialist in the New Testament of the same rank as those whose names

have been mentioned on the other side. There can be no reasonable question as to where the weight of scholarship lies.

What now is this modern position with reference to the Ministry? I must be brief and only attempt the most rudimentary outline :

1. In the first place it springs out of the historical method, and the application of the principle of development to the early history of the Church. With respect to the historical method I can say nothing, but I may refer you to an interesting chapter in Canon Storr's important work on "English Theology in the 19th Century." With respect to the latter, I may give one quotation from Bishop Lightfoot, and refer to an article in *The Expositor* some twenty-five years ago, by Dr. Sanday. Dr. Lightfoot wrote thus as his summing up of the origin of the Episcopate : "If the bishop was at first used as a synonym for presbyter and afterwards came to designate the higher officer under whom the presbyters served, the Episcopate properly so-called would seem to have been developed from the subordinate office. In other words, the Episcopate was formed, not out of the apostolic order by localization, but out of the presbyteral by elevation." (*Commentary on Philippians*, 8th ed., p. 196.) Dr. Sanday in the *Expositor* shewed that the old assumption of a fixed form of Church Government to be found in the New Testament was not borne out by the facts. The New Testament *imposes* upon the Church no one form of Government, whether Congregational, Presbyterian or Episcopal. The Church *passed through* the stages of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism on its way to Episcopacy. In complete harmony with the verdict of these two great scholars is the admission of Bishop Gore ("Orders

and Unity," p. 83) that from the New Testament "no decisive conclusion as to the form of the Christian ministry can be reached," and in his open letter recently published, he has said : "It is quite true that the Church of England imposes upon the clergy no obligation to hold the dogma that only Episcopal ordinations are valid, and only priestly consecrations of the Eucharist, and that Bishops are of the *esse* of the Church."

2. In the next place, the whole question of the origin of Church Government was greatly affected by the discovery of the "Didache," the little book published in 1886, and known as "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." In it was revealed a "prophetic" ministry of direct call without ordination, and this ministry was seen to have been regarded as of even greater authority than that of the ordained minister, and this, not only in respect of preaching, but of the celebration of the Eucharist. This discovery threw back a flood of light on many passages of the New Testament which hitherto had not been supposed to have any particular bearing on the question, but are now seen to be of first-rate importance.

That the results of this modern investigation are injurious to the Anglican retention of Episcopacy is far from the case. Personally, I believe they are destructive of the Tractarian position, but they strongly reinforce a moderate view of Episcopacy in ways which I must not attempt to describe now.

There is, however, no doubt that the great weight of scholarship behind this modern view of the ministry is producing its inevitable effect. The best short summary of the whole position is that of Mr. Rawlinson in the now somewhat famous volume known as "Foundations." The significance of this essay, which

is one of great learning, candour, and lucidity, lies in the fact that when it was written the author was tutor of Keble College, Oxford. I must not stop to give even the briefest analysis of this essay, but simply read you one or two quotations, which I hope and believe are not violently torn out of their context. Mr. Rawlinson writes as a High Churchman, but one who is looking for a new kind of foundation upon which to base his High Churchmanship. [I may add that there is almost nothing in his essay that I personally cannot accept though I might not agree to all the deductions which he draws from his conclusions.]

"In its strictest and most traditional form the theory of an original Apostolic succession has perhaps broken down ; but the liberalized restatement of it, which is to be found in the writings of Duchesne and Batiffel abroad and the present Bishop of Oxford at home, is at least a tenable interpretation of the evidence as viewed in the light of certain antecedent presuppositions. It is not, however, likely, in the nature of the case, to carry conviction to those who do not approach the evidence with the presuppositions in question, for though a view with which the facts are compatible, it is not one which they necessitate."

So again, "with regard however to the form and manner of ministerial appointment and the sense, if any, in which what is called Apostolical Succession may legitimately be asserted as a literal fact of history, the evidence is almost, if not quite, non-existent."

(418)

Mr. Rawlinson concludes that "the attempt to reach precise agreement upon grounds of history alone is a fundamentally mistaken one, and that the problem must really be decided. . . in a quite different sphere."
(383, 384.)

Here is another significant quotation : "If therefore we are debarred from considering the form of the ministry as constituted and determined from all time by actual legislation proceeding from our Lord's own lips, its authority must on any view be regarded as mediated through the Church by which, under the guidance of the promised Spirit, it was evolved. To those who are interested in controversies of Church Order, primarily as they bear upon the practical problem of reunion, this is a consideration of capital importance. For what the Church has determined the Church might conceivably alter. There is no longer any rigid necessity, at any rate in theory, for the future to be determined by the past." (385.)

The following quotation strikes a new note from the side of our High Church brothers : "It follows therefore, inasmuch as the ideal of a reunited Christendom involves and postulates ultimately some corporate action of Christendom, as a whole, that any requirement of a particular form of Church Order as a term of eventual reunion must be justified upon its intrinsic merits, and not based merely upon antiquarian precedents." (386).

Here again is a passage of great importance and value. "The non-Episcopal communions which date from the Reformation can now point to some three hundred years of vigorous, spiritual life and Christian experience, and may claim, not without reason, to be regarded as something more than a temporary anomaly. . . . It is unreasonable to expect either the disappearance of Protestantism, or the unconditional repudiation by Protestants of the significance of their spiritual history. The ministries of the various Protestant denominations may quite legitimately point to the witness of the souls they shepherd, and with St. Paul

exclaim, 'The seal of our apostleship are ye in the Lord.' " (386).

I have drawn your attention to this essay, not only because of its intrinsic interest, but because it seems to me to have a very valuable eirenic possibility. I cannot but think that if half-a-dozen men of various shades of thought with reference to this topic, got together and read this essay, discussing it clause by clause, they would find themselves much nearer together when they finished it than when they began it. It helps one to see, what one has sometimes despaired of, the possibility of a reconciliation of the two main types of Christian thought and life, whose legitimacy Mr. Rawlinson unreservedly admits, the Catholic and the Protestant.

And this is at present the main object of our League. To study, to investigate and to educate, with a view to a growing measure of agreement amongst ourselves. To quote Mr. Rawlinson once more : "By thought and prayer and study, by the slow interchange of opinions, and the perhaps slower spread of charity ; by the intellectual toil of scholars and theologians, and the eventual leavening of the popular mind by their results ; by the dissipation of prejudice and the mutual learning of each from each ; after many days, in the appointed time, the Vision of Unity, which it has been given to our generation to see afar off, shall come and shall not tarry." (407).